

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3695

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 3213

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PFOR PA

SUBJECT: STROESSNER CONFIDANTS HOLD LENGTHY MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR

1. SUMMARY: TWO KEY ADVISERS TO PRESIDENT STROESSNER, PRESIDENTIAL AIDE CONRADO PAPPALARDO AND CENTRAL BANK PRESIDENT ROMEO ACOSTA, INVITED ME TO PRIVATE MEETING LAST NIGHT, TO FIND A WAY OUT OF CURRENT IMPASSE AND TO MAKE CLEAR GOP'S DESIRE TO CONTINUE AID RELATIONSHIP. PAPPALARDO INDICATED LAINO WILL BE FREED NEXT WEEK AND BOTH MEN DESCRIBED DELIMMA OVER DATE OF IAHRV VISIT IN FACE OF CONTRADICTORY PROMISES GOP HAS MADE TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRESIDENTS OF FIVE SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES. THEY AGREED, RECALLING THAT NO DELEGATION AT THE OASGA HAD VOTED WITH PARAGUAY AGAINST THE IAHRV RESOLUTION, TO APPROACH THE PRESIDENT JOINTLY AND ASK HIM TO RECONSIDER ALLOWING THE IAHRV TO COME HERE. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENTIAL ADVISERS PAPPALARDO AND ROMEO ACOSTA MET WITH ME EVENING OF AUGUST 4 AT THEIR INITIATIVE TO DISCUSS CURRENT STATE OF PARAGUAYAN-US RELATIONS AND WAY TO IMPROVE THEM. DURING THE COURSE OF THE FIVE HOUR MEETING AT PAPPALARDO'S HOME, IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT BOTH CONFIDANTS OF PRESIDENT STROESSNER BELIEVE AN ORAL AGREEMENT EXISTS AMONG THE CHIEFS OF STATE OF BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, CHILE, URUGUAY AND PARAGUAY NOT TO PERMIT A VISIT TO ANY OF THEIR COUNTRIES BY THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMISSION. BOTH MEN INDICATED TO ME THAT URUGUAY SPONSORED THE AGREEMENT IN MID-1977 BUT DID SO ON BRAZIL'S INITIATIVE. STROESSNER AGREED TO GO ALONG, ACCORDING TO THEM, BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH PRESIDENT GEISEL WHO PERSONALLY PERSUADED HIM TO JOIN THE OTHERS.

3. THE LAINO CASE ONLY ENTERED OUR CONVERSATION BRIEFLY.

PAPPALARDO VOLUNTEERED THE COMMENT THAT BY THIS TIME NEXT WEEK LAINO WILL BE FREE.

4. MAIN THRUST OF THEIR SIDE OF CONVERSATION CENTERED ON PARAGUAYAN RESENTMENT AT US PRESSURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS. NOT ONLY ARE FSO LOANS DENIED THE GOP BUT IT IS NOW ENCOUNTERING MOUNTING DIFFICULTIES IN SECURING LOANS FROM PRIVATE BANKS WHICH PLEAD US GOVERNMENT PRESSURE. ACOSTA AND PAPPALARDO HAVE ESTABLISHED A HIERARCHY OF DEVILS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS DEPLORABLE STATE OF AFFAIRS--NOT SURPRISINGLY, WARREN CHRISTOPHER LEADS THEIR LIST, WITH FRANK MCNEIL, PATRICIA DERIAN, MARK SCHNEIDER, RICHARD FEINBERG, AND WOLA CLOSE BEHIND. I, OF COURSE, THEY SALUTED AS THEIR GREAT FRIEND, WORKING TO CREATE UNDERSTANDING FOR PARAGUAY IN THE US, ALTHOUGH THEY DID ADMIT TO SOME RESERVATIONS AT SEVERAL POINTS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS.

5. I TOLD THEM THAT THE VISIT OF THE IAHRC WAS THE KEY TO RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. WITH THE FIXED DATE OUT OF THE WAY, WE COULD MOVE ONCE AGAIN TOWARD A MORE HARMONIOUS AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP BASED SQUARELY ON PARAGUAY'S RAPIDLY IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. FAILURE TO FULFILL THE PROMISE TO ALLOW A VISIT MADE BY PRESIDENT STROESSNER TO PRESIDENT CARTER LAST SEPTEMBER HAS CAUSED THE SUSPENSION OF NEW PROGRAMS. NONE CAN BE UNDERTAKEN UNTIL THAT PROMISE IS REDEEMED AND I WOULD BE POWERLESS TO PREVENT THE EROSION AND EVENTUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF THE MILITARY

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AND ECONOMIC MISSIONS ASSIGNED HERE.

6. AT THIS JUNCTURE, ACOSTA AND PAPPALARDO BEGAN TO DISCUSS BETWEEN THEMSELVES WHAT TACTICS THEY WOULD USE TO PERSUADE PRESIDENT STROESSNER TO GRANT THE VISIT. I POINTED OUT THAT THE RESOLUTION ON PARAGUAY PASSED AT THE VIII OASGA HAD SPECIFICALLY MANDATED THE IAHRC TO CONTINUE TO MONITOR PARAGUAY'S PERFORMANCE AND TO MAKE A NEW REPORT TO THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY. ALLOWING THE COMMISSION TO VISIT, IT SAID, COULD ONLY HELP IMPROVE THE INEVITABLE REPORT.

7. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT THE SOUTHERN CONE AGREEMENT NOT TO PERMIT ANY IAHRC VISITS CAME INTO THE CONVERSATION. ACOSTA ADMITTED HE DID NOT LIKE TO USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT UNLESS HE SAW A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING HIS CASE. I SAID I DID NOT BELIEVE BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA WERE REALLY ALL THAT INTERESTED IN WHETHER AN IAHRC VISIT TO PARAGUAY TOOK PLACE OR NOT SINCE BOTH THEIR DELEGATIONS HAD ABSTAINED ON THE GA RESOLUTION ON PARAGUAY. THIS CAME AS NEWS TO ACOSTA WHO GREW VISIBLY ANGRY AND ASKED ME WHICH GOVERNMENTS HAD SUPPORTED PARAGUAY. WHEN I TOLD HIM PARAGUAY HAD STOOD ALONE, HE TURNED TO PAPPALARDO AND SAID "PARAGUAY HAD BETTER BEGIN TO LOOK TO ITS

OWN INTERESTS." THEY THEN AGREED TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE PRESIDENT TO RECONSIDER PERMITTING THE VISIT AND DECIDED TO MAKE THE EFFORT WHEN STROESSNER VISITS ACOSTA'S ESTANCIA ON AUGUST 9.

8. COMMENT: ACOSTA IS ONE OF ONLY TWO REMAINING CABINET MEMBERS WHO FOUGHT ALONGSIDE STROESSNER IN THE CHACO WAR. THIS GIVES HIM GREAT INFLUENCE WITH THE SOLE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY HERE. I WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE A POINT I HAVE MADE BEFORE--AND TO SAY THAT IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT AT THIS JUNCTURE NOT TO DISTURB WHAT MAY WELL BE A SITUATION THAT IS EVOLVING FAVORABLY BY GIVING THE GOP ANY MIXED SIGNALS.
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